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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201-0004

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201-0004

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

Last year, I wrote to you to ask a very straightforward question: Why are there so many dialysis centers in black neighborhoods? Today, I feel compelled to follow up with an even more urgent question: What can be done to safely expedite the option of home dialysis in light of the coronavirus pandemic?

According to Dr. Jenny Shen, "black patients are still less likely to use home dialysis than other racial and ethnic groups."¹ I find this disproportionate statistic concerning particularly given the increased risks due to the pandemic. Specifically, as you know, dialysis patients who contract the coronavirus are at higher risk of negative complications due to their underlying medical conditions. Additionally, those who receive dialysis in a clinic are unable to self-quarantine because they require dialysis treatments multiple times a week. Consequently, transportation for these patients and their providers is another key area of concern. Finally, frontline healthcare workers require medical supplies for both their own protection and for the protection of their patients. I have heard from stakeholders that clinics are currently running low.

I remain cautiously optimistic about the goals of the *Advancing American Kidney Health* initiative. While ambitious, I believe — now more than ever — it is paramount that we work together to make it easier for patients to receive dialysis treatments at home when possible. While the benchmark set by the *Advancing American Kidney Health* initiative is "to have 80 percent of new American ESRD patients in 2025 receiving dialysis in the home or receiving a transplant,"² I would

¹ Webb, Melissa J. "Home Dialysis Increases in United States Regardless of Patient Race/Ethnicity." Healio, July 18, 2019. <https://www.healio.com/nephrology/home-dialysis/news/online/{0595b0b3-5356-42c0-9487-ed15fee65b07}/home-dialysis-increases-in-united-states-regardless-of-patient-raceethnicity>.

² "Advancing American Kidney Health." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed March 26, 2020. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/262046/AdvancingAmericanKidneyHealth.pdf>.

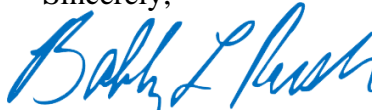
like to request an update on what is occurring to ensure that this population is receiving the best care possible. Specifically:

- What policies have you implemented or are you considering to expedite safe home dialysis options for both new and current dialysis patients?
- What are you doing to ensure that patients and frontline providers have the resources they need both when in clinics and in transit?

I look forward to working with you to ensure the Department of Health and Human Services has the authorities and resources necessary to act decisively for this patient population.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bobby L. Rush", is positioned above the printed name.

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress